

DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION**Kenneth E. Walto, Chairman**

The Dalton Development and Industrial Commission is the town's economic development agency. The commission was organized following a recommendation of the 2001 Master Plan, and was "accepted" by the town at the 2002 Annual Town Meeting. By law, the commission's mission is to "promote and develop the industrial resources of the town" and to "investigate and assist in the establishment of educational or commercial projects for the purpose of strengthening the local economy."

Two Thousand and Four was the second full year of operation for the commission. During its second year, the commission participated in several significant economic development ventures:

Work continued on the creation of an Industrial Park. Of the eight sites originally outlined in the Dalton Business Development Plan, two are actively being considered. SK Design was retained by the town to do a preliminary design for the sites. Both lie between South Street and Hubbard Avenue on undeveloped land. In June, SK Design completed the first study for land just south of the railroad line. The approximately 40-acre parcel would cost \$767,372 to develop excluding land acquisition. It could be subdivided in up to nine lots of varying sizes. That site, however, is hampered by poor access onto either Hubbard Avenue or South Street. Continued investigation of that site has been put on hold while the second site study progresses. The second site lies just to the north of the rail line. Some of the land lies in the City of Pittsfield and could be developed as a joint project with the city. Once completed the commission must determine which site has the greatest development potential. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission will work with the town to prepare a funding strategy for one of the two sites.

The commission participated in the regional planning effort to create a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, CEDS. Completion of the CEDS is a prerequisite for funding from the Federal Economic Development Administration. The CEDS committee met over several months to develop a regional economic development strategy and a set of priority projects. The Dalton Business Park was listed among the top ten projects.

Pre-construction activities continued for implementation of the downtown building façade and sign improvement project. The project is being funded by the state through a \$250,000 Federal Community Development Block Grant. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission had prepared the grant application on behalf of the town and the town subsequently retained the commission to administer the project. Funding applications were solicited, and nineteen were received. Thus far, nine projects have been approved for \$195,000: Union Block, Post Office, Juice N Java Building, Old Dalton Garage, West Automotive, Jacobs, Center Block, Dalton General Store and, Kelly's. Blue Line Design, a Great Barrington architectural firm, was hired to prepare designs and bid specification and to oversee the construction. As the year ended, grant awards were being made and legal documents finalized. Project bidding and construction will commence in the spring of 2005.

In May the commission conducted a Forum for Town Employers at the Wahconah Country Club with the assistance and sponsorship of the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce. Consultant Matthew Kerwood planned the event with

the chamber. Approximately 60 participants representing 40 business and other community organizations attended the breakfast meeting. The meeting included presentations about development financing opportunities. The attendees also divided into seven groups to consider and report on priority economic development issues: Zoning, Infrastructure, Taxes, Education, Health Care, Utility Costs and Workforce Concerns.

I thank the commission members for their gift of time to the town. Their selfless efforts will help to ensure the economic health of the community for years to come.

Members of the Commission: Robert M. Allessio, Bryan E. Boeskin (resigned), Charles J. Dooley, Vice-Chair, Michael J. Ferry, Denis E. Guyer (resigned), Timothy Kiley, Robert A. Proskin, Stephen A. Sears, Augustus J. Schnopp, Jr., William A. Suriner, Kenneth E. Walto, Chairman, William R. Wilson, Jr.